



[Jean Lave, from video lecture, Berkeley, California, March 2012](#)

Everyday Life and Learning

The big prize that is ahead of us in our studies, and which we are pursuing in this course on education, is a method that would serve to lift the entire population, as it is, to a higher and common level of revolutionary culture.

In this pursuit, we have looked, among others, at Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", N F S Grundtvig's "Schools for Life", the Cuban idea of the "Universalization of the University", and we have touched on McLaren and Fischman's treatment of Antonio Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectuals". We have read about "People's Education for People's Power" and we have understood Lenin when he wrote that all education is political, and that therefore *"we cannot conduct educational work in isolation from politics."*

Jean Lave and her correspondents (the Activity Theorists) have arrived at the same point as ourselves, by various routes. They present us with another glimpse at the prize that we seek. Simply, Jean Lave claims to have studied empirically, and then understood theoretically, some of the process by which education takes place, as it has always done, in everyday life, throughout human history and pre-history.

There are educative mechanisms in everyday life that serve to educate the people. Human life is in fact a process of teaching and learning. Humans are those who do this. Consequently, humanity creates and improves, in a progression that we call humanism.

Schooling may or may not be educative, but schooling in our class-divided circumstances leaves most of the people branded, in varying degrees, as failures and rejects, and schooling has no good answer for the unemployed and the excluded that it leaves behind.

For the first time in any of its courses, the CU now recommends a video, which is of Professor Lave giving her lecture “[Everyday Life and Learning](#)” at her home University of California, Berkeley, on 26 March 2012. The lecture itself is about 50 minutes long and in this form it is very easy to take in, and it is enjoyable.

The first of several surprises that Lave presents is that in workshops where apprentices are employed, no explicit

teaching takes place. Rather, the apprentices learn from being there, and from living through the experience. The second surprise is that the technical skills learned are only a part, and are not the main part, of what is learned. The apprentices are learning how to be. Lave explains this very well.

The attached text is redacted from a lecture given by Dr Lave the previous year at the congress of ISCAR ([International Society for Cultural and Activity Research](#)), when she was summing up the congress. In some ways the two lectures are the same lecture, but the version given in the video is more accessible, while the one given to her colleagues at the ISCAR congress in Rome in 2011 is more exhaustive and more exhausting, but also more politically explicit. The lecture is published by [Mind, Culture, and Activity](#), a scholarly journal for Activity Theorists.

What can we take from this? Jean Lave's theories and those of her colleagues have all-round revolutionary potential. A starting point could be to exploit the way that these provide a place from which to criticise schooling. These theories strip away schooling's claims of unique, exclusive power in education. These theories can help restore dignity to processes that have been dismissed by the rise of schooling, or more specifically, by the rise of schooling of the capitalist kind, under capitalism.

As can be seen from the attached text file, Jean Lave is not shy to make the connection between her own critique and

that of Karl Marx, citing the Third Thesis on Feuerbach in particular. Lave also calls on the assistance of Gramsci and of the Gramscian scholars of today.

This is Jean Lave's non-sexist-language version of Marx's Third Thesis on Feuerbach:

"The materialist doctrine that people are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed people are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is people who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator her/himself. Hence, this doctrine necessarily arrives at dividing society into two parts, one of which is superior to society. The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionizing practice." (Marx, 1845)

Below are more resources thrown up by the CU's researches around Jean Lave's work.

Lave lectures on video

<http://www.uctv.tv/shows/Everyday-Life-and-Learning-23201>

(the "Everyday Life and Learning" lecture)

<http://vimeo.com/groups/chat/videos/28855105>

Lave lecture in PDF

<http://lchc.ucsd.edu/MCA/Journal/pdfs/19-2-lave.pdf>

“Activity Theory” resources

<http://lchc.ucsd.edu/MCA/Journal/contents.html>

<http://lchc.ucsd.edu/Histarch/newsletters.html>

Wikipedia

[Communities of Practice](#)

[Legitimate peripheral participation](#)

[Situated learning](#)

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Changing Practice, Jean Lave, 2012.](#)
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here.](#)